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ABSTRACT

Remedial readers may be given opportunities to be creative through three approaches: inventiveness games, branched fiction, and pantomime and creative dramatics. Inventiveness games can stimulate creative thinking and serve as a launching pad for creative writing activities. In branched fiction, the story works up to a cliffhanger situation and then offers the remedial reader choices about how the story will continue. The reader controls the plot and creates the story by the choices available. Branched stories also have a positive effect on the attention, interest, and comprehension of remedial readers. Their format promotes creative reading. Pantomime practice enables the readers to develop their powers of creativity, to use body English for projecting certain ideas, to gain confidence about doing things in front of a group, and to "act out" new words. The use of popular ballads in creative dramatics offers remedial readers an opportunity to listen to the words, read along, and act out the story. They are then ready to write their dramas based on the ballad and, in accordance with the language experience approach, they can read what they have written. (Various activities are presented under each of the approaches discussed.) (HOD)

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RELEASING THE REMEDIAL READER'S CREATIVE POWER

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RELEASING THE REMEDIAL READER'S CREATIVE POWER

Eureka must have been Thomas Eduson's favorite word. He had tremendous creative powers. He was always inventing things. But on the basis of his performance in school, he could easily have landed in a remedial class.

You may not have a potential Edison among your remedial readers, but you probably do have some students whose creative powers have not not been tapped. These students may be capable of inventive thinking, given the right stimulation. Remedial readers, however, are seldom stimulated in the direction of creativity. More often they are drowned in drillwork.

To give your remedial readers opportunities to be creative, you might try these three approaches:

- inventiveness games
- branched fiction
- pantomime and creative dramatics

Inventiveness games can stimulate creative thinking. Branched fiction can promote creative reading through such series as the Attention Span Books and the Choose Your Own Adventure Books. Pantomime and creative dramatics can release creative powers and improve self-image. Often the language experience approach can be used to tie the other strategies to the reading and language arts curriculum.

Inventiveness Games

Inventiveness games provide experiences that demand creative thinking. To introduce your remedial readers to the simulation game of "new use" inventiveness, you should have each of them place an object on a table in the center of the room. Any objects the students offer will do--scissors, a mirror, a book, gloves, a pen, a pill box, anything. Then have the students stand in a large circle around the table.

Say, "Suppose you were shipwrecked and washed up on a desert island, like Robinson Crusoe. And suppose these objects on the table were the only things washed up with you. Try to think of a new use for one of the objects, a use that would help you survive or get rescued. When you succeed in thinking of a new use, walk to the table and pick up the object. Then, one at a time, you can show or explain the new use."

You might then demonstrate by walking to the table, picking up the mirror, and saying, "This mirror is usually used for looking at yourself. But on my desert island I'd use it to catch the sun's rays and signal for help or start a fire."

Perhaps only a few of your students will participate in the first round of this activity. The majority may need time to get the wheels of inventiveness moving in their minds. Within a few rounds, however, your students will probably invent quite a few new uses. (Mountain, 1974).

For an athletic variation on the inventiveness theme, you might have your students demonstrate as many ways as possible of crossing the room (or the gym or the playground) without walking.

Have them stand in a large circle. Say, "Each one of you in turn has to think of a new way to get across this circle without walking. Noone can copy what a preceding student has done."

Initially, you will find students running, hopping, skipping, jumping, tramping, strutting, crawling, tiptoeing and marching. But once these possibilities have been exhausted, more creative maneuvers will be attempted--dancing, walking forward on all fours, walking backward on all fours, sliding, rolling, walking on one's hands, or somersaulting.

Today inventiveness is needed to cope with shortages. Your students probably know that we may face a shortage of the raw materials that go into sticky adhesives. So they'll feel that you are really preparing them for the future when you lead them through this "Stick-Em" inventiveness game.

Tell your students, "Your task is to join two things so that they say together. Your difficulty is that you have nothing sticky with which to do the job--no glue, no paste, no scotch tape, no adhesive tape, no putty, no gum. Look around the room to find two things you want to join. As soon as you think of a way to make them stay together, get the two objects. Bring them to the front desk, and demonstrate how you can make them stay together."

Depending on the resources in the room, you may see demonstrations of clipping, tieing, pinning, nailing, stitching, lacing, braiding, stapling, pinning, bagging, wedging, packing, folding, mixing, stirring, and dissolving (Crawley and Mountain, 1980).

You might present the next inventiveness game by saying, "Suppose you have to leave an important message for someone, but you have no pencil, crayon or pen for writing. How can you leave the message?"

Yourstudents may surprise you with the number of solutions they create. Writing the message with stones, beads, glue, paper letters or string are only a few possible solutions. Some students may dip a stick or a feather into ink, dirty water, mud, or ashes to write the message. Other possibilities are carving letters into wood, scratching out the message with a rock on pavement, charring a stick for a writing instrument, or burning the message onto leather or cloth.

To create another situation that calls for inventiveness, drop a handful of beans on the floor. Tell your students, "You do not have any dishes, cups, bowls, pans, glasses, cans, bottles, or boxes in which to carry these beans. Your task is to move the beans to the table withour using any of the previously-mentioned containers and withour scooping them up in your hands."

Your students' toes and teeth may be put into operation early in this endeavor. Or they may push the beans onto a cardboard to lift them from the floor to the table. Some student might put glue on one side of the paper, turn the glue side of the paper to the beans, and get the beans to stick to the paper. Another student might plug up the hole in the bottom of a funnel, and fill it with beans. Whatever inventive approaches your students decide on, chances are the beans will all end up on the table.

Inventiveness games start as oral and/or kinesthetic experiences, but they can easily be used to motivate creative writing. After the Robinson Crusoe simulation, for example, you and your students could come up with a new set of items that were washed up on shore after the shipwreck. Your students could then write adventure stories of how they survived with the help of these items.

Almost any inventiveness game can serve as a lauching pad for a creative writing activity. And, as we know from the langauge experience approach, what a student can say and write, he can also read. So inventiveness games can help remedial readers discover their creative powers and extend their creativity into writing and reading situations.

Branched Fiction

Remedial readers can find out from some recently-published series of books that it's fun to create your own story as you read. This form of creativity is promoted by branched fiction. In branched fiction, the story works up to a cliffhanger situation and then offers the reader choices about how the story will continue. The reader controls the plot and creates the story he wants by the choices he makes.

In the adventure story, Journey Under the Sea by R. A. Montgomery, for example, the reader encounters this situation on page 53.

> But no sooner do you get out of the kelp, than you are caught in the vortex of a giant whirlpool!
>
> If you try to swim out of the whirlpool, turn to page 69.
>
> If you dive into the vortex of the whirlpool, hoping to reach the bottom and get out, turn to page 70.

In the Attention Span Series, by Lee Mountain, each page ends with a choice of three cliffhangers, as shown in the excerpt below from Time Trip, page 9.

> Clouds of cold gray fog rose around Joe. For a few moments he felt as light as a leaf, floating through the fog. Then suddenly he knew there was something solid beneath his feet again. A second later everything came into focus, and he saw a . . . .
>
> | FLYING LIZARD | STREAK OF LIGHTNING | PYRAMID |
> |---|---|---|
> | continued on page 11 | continued on page 13 | continued on page 15 |
>
> TAKE YOUR CHOICE

The story continues on all three pages. The reader chooses the episode that interests him and skips the other two. When the reader completes the episode that involves either a flying lizard or a streak of lightning or a pyramid, he is again given three choices. So again he skips some pages and reads the next episode of his choice. The comprehension questions at the end of the story are keyed to the pages read.

Branched fiction offers readers a choice in plot direction, and this element of choice seems to appeal to reluctant readers and stimulate their creativity. According to studies by Crawley (1978) and McDaniel (1979) branched stories also have a positive effect on the attentiveness, interest, and comprehension of remedial readers. Their format promotes creative reading.

Pantomime and Creative Dramatics

Pantomime practice enables remedial readers to develop their powers of creativity, to use body English for projecting certain ideas, to gain confidence about doing things in front of a group, and to "act out" new words, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, etc. To help your remedial readers loosen up for pantomine, have them stand in circles of five. Then say, "Imagine that someone has placed a sphere in the center of your circle. In silence, do things with the sphere."

After a minute of this activity, stop and discuss what has happened. See if each person in the circle understood what everyone else was doing with the sphere.

Then say, "Now pretend that you can make the sphere into anything you imagine. Use your hands to shape it into what you want it to be. Then, in silence, pass it to the person next to you in the circle. That person must

indicate to you by his handling of it that he understands what you have made of it. If he cannot identify your object, you should break the silence to ask if anyone else in the circle can help him. If nobody understood your activity, you should explain what you made. The person beside you then shapes your object into whatever he wants it to be and passes it on to the next person."

After everyone in the circle has participated, stop again to discuss what has happened. Find out what pantomime clues best communicated each object.

Another warm-up activity for pantomime is "Activities and Discomforts". Examples of activities are walking, swimming, eating, sewing, kissing. Examples of discomforts are an upset stomach, sleepiness, an earache, thirst, a broken toe, or even harrassment by a persistent mosquito.

When you put together an activity with a discomfort, you can get an interesting pantomime, such as eating spaghetti with an upset stomach, pouring lemonade while a bee buzzes around you, zipping up slacks that are too tight, getting dressed with a severe sunburn, or sitting on a wad of chewing gum.

Obviously the activity and the discomfort need to match. "Playing tennis against an opponent with bad breath" would be hard to pantomime. But "kissing someone with bad breath" puts together the activity and the discomfort.

For "Activities with Discomforts" divide your class into groups of seven or eight people. Each of these people will write an activity-with-discomfort and will pass it to the person on his right. That person has to pantomime the activity-with-discomfort for the group. Then any member of the group (other than the one who wrote the activity) can guess what the pantomimer is doing. (Mountain, 1974)

Once your remedial readers get good enough at pantomime so that they can recognize each others charades, they can start using this creative approach on the word study part of the reading program. To promote their understanding of synonyms you might say, "There are many words that have meanings similar to the word walk. We call these words synonyms of walk." Then bring forward a student who is good at pantomime and say, "I'm going to show this student a wordcard with a synonym for walk on it. She will then demonstrate the synonym, and you will guess what it is."

Synonyms such as strut, slink, shuffle, dash, saunter, and hobble create interesting demonstrations of various gaits. Some of your students' guesses may show as much creativity as your pantomimer's demonstrations.

This same approach works well for releasing creativity during the study of antonyms. You might show a pair of students the antonyms hot and cold, and have them act out the words for the class to guess. If your remedial readers are sufficiently creative, they can also convey pairs of homonyms such as rain and reign through pantomime.

It's handy if you, as a remedial reading teacher, are good at charades, since pantomime offers you a novel way of presenting the new vocabulary for a story. If you act out some of the words for your students to guess before you write the new vocabulary list on the board, you'll be serving as a model of creative approaches.

Through creative dramatics, you can get lots of classroom mileage from popular ballads, such as Kenny Rogers "Coward of the County". After students listen to the words and then read along, they can act out the story. After they have recreated the story in their own words in their creative dramatics scenes, they are ready to write their dramas based on the ballad. Finally,

in accordance with the language experience approach, they read what they have written. Their success in this creative endeavor bolsters their self-images (Deeds, 1981).

Through classroom use of inventiveness games, branched fiction, pantomime and creative dramatics, you can make your remedial readers feel as creative as Edison -- which is enough to make you say Eureka.

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